

OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING FOR TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

CONDUCTED FOR THE
TRANSPORTATION
PERFORMANCE AUDIT BOARD

FUNDED BY THE LEGISLATIVE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

PROPOSED SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

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STATE OF WASHINGTON
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND
REVIEW COMMITTEE

STUDY TEAM
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The Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB) and the Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) have recently approved and funded a targeted set of performance measure reviews, performance audits, and studies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of state transportation programs. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) is to conduct several of these audits, including this overview of transportation project environmental permitting.

BACKGROUND

A long-running concern associated with enhancing the state's transportation system is how to safeguard environmental quality without imposing untimely delays on transportation solutions.

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, in its final recommendations in 2000, identified the need to streamline permitting, recommending a variety of approaches such as "one-stop" permitting and the use of a single permit application.

A 2001 legislative response to this issue was the creation of the Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee (TPEAC). The work plan of the TPEAC includes the subjects of one-stop permitting, programmatic permits, pilot projects to test a new collaborative permit review process, uniform standards for local government permits, watershed-based mitigation strategies, and the link with federal permit authority. Originally scheduled to end its work in March 2003, the Legislature has extended the TPEAC through March 2006.

Washington state is not alone in its efforts to find solutions to the dilemma of safeguarding environmental quality while streamlining the environmental permitting process. Similar efforts are underway in other states and by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

STUDY SCOPE

As directed by TPAB, this analysis will compile information on work that has been completed, is underway, or is planned in the immediate future on environmental permitting for transportation projects, with the goal of identifying options for future TPAB audit and evaluation studies that will complement and augment existing work on this topic.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

1. Review of prior environmental permitting studies and current coordination and streamlining efforts. This will include work by the Legislative Transportation Committee, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, and the Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee.

In addition, the study will include a review of streamlining efforts for transportation projects completed, underway, or planned by Washington state legislative and executive branch agencies including multi-agency permitting teams.
2. Review efforts underway at the federal level on implementation of the President's 2002 executive order to enhance environmental stewardship while streamlining the decision making process for major transportation projects.
3. Review lessons learned by other states on environmental streamlining practices in the transportation arena.
4. Based on these reviews, identify options for future TPAB audit and evaluation studies on environmental permitting for transportation projects.

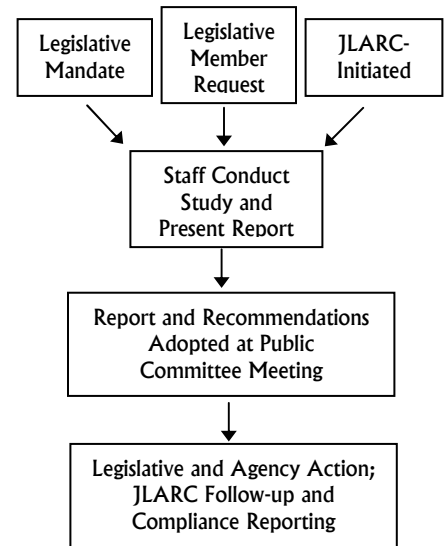
TIMEFRAME FOR THE STUDY

Report to be delivered to TPAB and LTC by December 15, 2004.

JLARC STAFF CONTACT FOR STUDY

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JLARC Study Process



Criteria for Establishing JLARC Work Program Priorities

- Is study consistent with JLARC mission? Is it mandated?
- Is this an area of significant fiscal or program impact, a major policy issue facing the state, or otherwise of compelling public interest?
- Will there likely be substantive findings and recommendations?
- Is this the best use of JLARC resources? For example:
- Is the JLARC the most appropriate agency to perform the work?
- Would the study be nonduplicating?
- Would this study be cost-effective compared to other projects (e.g., larger, more substantive studies take longer and cost more, but might also yield more useful results)?
- Is funding available to carry out the project?

